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Mal (*into the phone*) Hallo, love ... listen, I'm sorry, I'm not going to be able to make it after all, love, not this lunchtime ... (*A little taken aback by the reaction*) ... no ... well, so am I, love ... So am — ... so am I ... yes, well, no more than I am, love ... I see ... yes, I see ... oh, no ... no, we can't have that, can we? ... We don't want that, no ... not my little Trixie, no ... (*Under pressure*) ... listen, I'll — I'll be there in ten minutes, then ... yes, I promise ... ten minutes. Yes ... 'bye-bye, Trix ... yes, I will ... love you, darling ... yes, I love you ... and I love you ... 'bye. (*Closing the phone*) Oh, shit! (*Calling*) Dean! Dean, mate! I have to go out, after all ...

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Mal She has poisoned that boy against me. Do you know that?

Dean Jill?

Mal He was a good boy. Gutsy. You know. Real fighter. Took on anyone. When he was five. Now look at him. Half way to — It's her. It's all her doing that. All of it.

Dean Well ...

Mal starts to unpack his takeaway during the next and puts it to re-heat in the offstage oven

Mal It's all her doing, you know. Kept giving him books for Christmas. Storybooks. Dolls.

Dean Dolls?

Mal You know. Toy people. He's a lad. He doesn't want all that. Then it was a doll's house. He had a bloody doll's house when he was five. Had his head stuck in it, jabbering away to himself for hours. Till I took it away, chucked it on the tip. Now it's theatre.

Dean Theatre. Well.

Mal Theatre. When he was born, you know, I had this dream, the way you do, you know, as a bloke does with his son, it's only natural — something a woman, she'd never understand — but you'll know what I'm talking about, Dean, I know you will, what with having Liam

and that — I was determined Sam'd grow up and do things I never could. Never had the opportunity to do. Good job, not like mine you know, better than that — professional — maybe shine at some sport or other, you know. I wasn't even bothered which. Football preferably, obviously, but if not ... Just so's I could point at him and say, that's my lad, there. Now, what's he doing ...?

Dean Shakespeare.

Mal What?

Dean He was reading it just now. Shakespeare.

Mal Enough to break your heart, isn't it?

A car horn sounds outside

Dean I'd better be going.

Mal (*clasping Dean's shoulder*) Thank God for you, Dean. You and Chrissie and little Liam. My hope for the future, mate. You three. Don't let me down. Or I'll come looking for you.

Dean (*squaring up to him*) Oh yeah?

Mal (*doing likewise*) Yeah!

Dean Yeah!

Mal Yeah!

Mal thumps Dean's shoulder. They smile

Dean See you tomorrow.

Mal Tomorrow, mate.

Dean starts to leave

Mal And Dean ... (*Pointing at him*) I'm holding you to that.

Mal (*getting the answering service*) Hallo, Trixie ... it's me ... I've just got home ... Trixie, I don't know where you are at the moment, why you're not picking up ... but I had to call to warn you ... Trixie, she knows ... she knows all about us ... and, Trixie, she's dangerous, love ... please God, she never finds out your address. I'd hate for anything to happen to you ... she's like a woman possessed ... punching people — threatening to kill them, I ... Trixie, I can't talk now she's coming back in the — oh my God! What's she got in her hand? Trixie — (*She rings off, abruptly; muttering*) Sleep well, dear.